

Uncertainty grows over RUCSU polls

RU teachers, officials threaten strike

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Uncertainty is deepening over the Rajshahi University Central Students' Union elections as teachers, officials, and employees of the university have announced a fresh strike demanding the reinstatement of the ward quota facility for admission of their children and grandchildren.

The RUCSU polls are scheduled to be held on September 15 after more than three decades.

On Thursday, professor Abdul Alim, president of the BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Teachers' Forum, announced that they would enforce a complete work abstention to press their demand in August 24–26, the days scheduled for distributing nomination papers for the RUCSU polls.

Earlier, on Tuesday midnight, the university authorities abruptly suspended the distribution of nomination papers, several hours before the process was due to begin at 9:00am Wednesday, triggering sharp criticism from students.

Regarding the midnight notice, RUCSU chief election commissioner professor Md Amzad Hossain told New Age that the decision was made because the nomination papers for hall unions could not be delivered to the respective halls due to the work abstention programme teachers and officials had been enforcing since Sunday.

In response to the crisis, the university authorities on Wednesday afternoon announced a revised schedule – August 24–26 for distributing the nomination papers and August 27–28 for submission of the nomination papers.

Student leaders, however, described the teachers and employees' movement as a conspiracy to derail the election process.

Salahuddin Ammar, a former coordinator of the RU unit of Students Against Discrimination, a platform which spearheaded the July mass uprising that ousted the authoritarian Awami League regime on August 5 past year, said that the ward quota issue had already been settled.

'It has been over eight months since the university authorities abolished the ward quota facility on January 2. After all these months, the teachers and employees' movement after the declaration of the RUCSU election schedule seems to be hatching a conspiracy to foil the elections,' he said, adding that there would be no return of ward quota at the university.

Rakib Hossain, RU unit president of the Bangladesh Students' Union, said that strike by teachers and employees on a settled issue was an attempt to foil the RUCSU elections.

He alleged that the university authorities were also behind this strike as they did not want the election to be held.

Further uncertainty arose as the government appointed professor Md Amzad Hossain, the RUCSU chief election commissioner, to the Bangladesh Public Service Commission as a member.

A notification, signed by public administration ministry deputy secretary Abu Saleh Md Mahfuzul Alam, was issued on Wednesday night in this connection.

Amzad said that he had requested the university administration to relieve him of the responsibility of RUCSU chief election commissioner.

Contacted, RU vice-chancellor professor Saleh Hasan Naqib told New Age that the change in the chief election commissioner would not affect the RUCSU elections.

‘However, if teachers and employees refrain from all kinds of administrative and academic activities, some sort of uncertainty may arise,’ he said, adding that he was trying to resolve the issue through discussions.